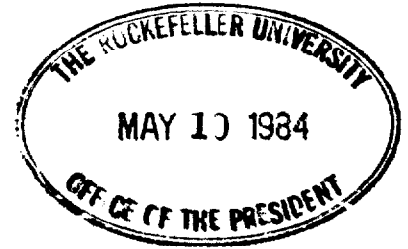


Program on Information Resources Policy

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Dr. Joshua Lederberg
The Rockefeller University
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Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I much appreciate your comments on my draft, "Information Technology and Cultural Change: Toward a New Literacy?", which John LeGates passed on to me.

I was a bit disappointed to discover that I cannot lay claim to having coined the term "The New Literacy", as your IEEE article from 1978 clearly establishes precedent. However, I believe the difference between your concept and mine is in part a function of the five years between our articles. Watching 10 year-olds attack a video screen with joystick or mouse or take to a personal computer leads me to suspect that even where writing is the primary end, this digital tool is leading to approaches to construction of thoughts and manipulation of ideas that the random access nature of the computer makes possible. I am the first to admit that my evidence at this point is only anecdotal and circumstantial. That is why I want to pursue work in this area. I believe that your concept of the new literacy is closer to the transition stage I identify ("old wine in new bottles"). At any rate, I find it a bit ironic to be put into bed with McLuhan, because I have never agreed his "medium is the message"--and still don't. I will have to work harder at articulating how my new literacy notions differ from the McLuhanesque.

Thank you again for your critique. I hope I may call on you again as this work progresses, using electronic as well as U.S. mail.

Yours truly,

Benjamin M. Compaine
Executive Director

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cc:JCL



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